



# the WATER TAP

WASHINGTON'S DRINKING WATER NEWSLETTER

## Water Fluoridation: Healthy Teeth, Complex Political Issue

Current state law allows local decision-making on whether communities in Washington fluoridate drinking water to prevent tooth decay. There were efforts in the 2000 legislative session to require fluoridation in many systems, and there could well be similar activity next year.

### Who Gets Fluoride in Water Now

An estimated 1.5 million Washington state residents get drinking water directly from 44 public water systems that add fluoride to their water to prevent tooth decay. About a million more people get fluoridated water indirectly because their systems buy fluoridated water from other systems. Another 300,000 drink water from systems that have naturally occurring fluoride at or near the optimal level for beneficial effects.

### The Dental Association's Proposal

The Washington State Dental Association backed Senate Bill 6665 in the 2000 session of the Legislature, proposing to make fluoridation mandatory for all public water systems in the state serving more than 1,000 residential connections if the water does not have naturally occurring fluoride at the recommended therapeutic level.

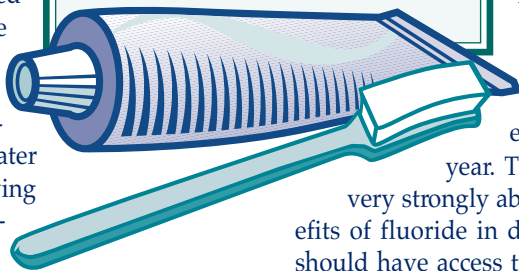
### The State Health Officer's Position

On January 14, 2000, State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes said:

*"Over 50 years ago, community water fluoridation was initiated in the United States. Currently, over 62 percent of the United States population is served by fluoridated water. Scientific research indicates that water fluoridation is the most cost-effective, practical and safe means for reducing the occurrence of tooth decay."*

*"Public health makes prevention available to all citizens, regardless of age, gender or socioeconomic status. Fluoridation assures that this population-based preventive measure benefits everyone. The safety and effectiveness of fluoridation have been documented by studies for over 50 years. The Surgeon General of the United States and over 73 national and international organizations endorse water fluoridation."*

*"The Department of Health supports water fluoridation as a sound population-based public health measure and it supports communities in their efforts to fluoridate community water supplies."*



Substitute Senate Bill 6665 added a provision that local jurisdictions would not be required to add fluoride "upon the adoption of an ordinance or resolution called by a petition of twenty-five percent of the registered voters of the city,

county, public utility district, or water district who voted in the last general election."

The Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee referred the substitute bill to the Ways and Means Committee with a "do pass" recommendation, but the bill made no further progress in the 2000 session.

### 2001 Session Prospects

Washington State Dental Association officials say they will sponsor another bill next year.

"We were very pleased with the progress of this year's bill," said Alice Kaderlan, Communications Director for the Washington State Dental Association. "Several things - including voter approval of fluoridation in Yakima by 72 percent - indicate that we may see even greater progress next

year. The Dental Association feels very strongly about the public health benefits of fluoride in drinking water. Everyone should have access to fluoridated water, especially children and older adults, and we intend to keep pressing the issue."

*Continued on back page...*



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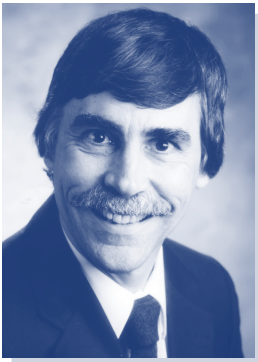


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# THE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

BY GREGG GRUNENFELDER



## **New Arsenic Standard:**

*Protects public health, poses challenges for Washington water systems.*

Arsenic is receiving a lot of attention in our state, revolving around issues such as arsenic-contaminated soils on Vashon and Maury Islands in King County and

wood treated with arsenic compounds used to build playground equipment. The attention is now turning to arsenic in drinking water with the release of the EPA proposed Arsenic Rule in late May.

The proposal establishes a significantly lower new standard for arsenic in drinking water. The current standard is 50 parts per billion (ppb). EPA is proposing a new standard of 5 ppb, but is also accepting public comment on other possible standards of 3 ppb, 10 ppb, and 20 ppb.

Arsenic in drinking water is a public health concern, and lowering the standard is a responsible public health protection measure that appears to have general support within the health community. The major debate is likely to be the specific regulatory level, and the costs associated with the lower standard. In October 1999, the American Water Works Association went on record supporting a lower arsenic standard but recommended that the proposed arsenic standard be no less than 10 ppb based upon cost-benefit issues. The World Health Organization has adopted 10 ppb as the international standard.

Whatever number is adopted, the new arsenic standard will have significant ramifications in Washington, particularly for small ground water systems. Naturally occurring arsenic in ground water is widespread, with very high levels in certain areas. Water systems will be challenged to develop new sources or build new treatment facilities to remove the arsenic in existing sources to meet new lower levels being proposed.

For more information on the arsenic proposal, visit the EPA arsenic web site at [www.epa.gov/safewater/arsenic.html](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/arsenic.html). I encourage you to review the proposed rule and provide comments, which EPA is accepting for 90 days after the rule is published in the federal register. A new standard is expected to become final by early 2001.

## **Washington Water Supply Advisory Committee:**

### *Committee Recommends New Activities and Resources*

The Washington Water Supply Advisory Committee recently made legislative and funding recommendations to the Department of Health regarding Washington's drinking water program.

At its April meeting, the Water Supply Advisory Committee endorsed the recommendations of a special subcommittee. This subcommittee, which has been meeting since last summer, discussed extensively the state's approach in the following four key areas of drinking water regulation:

- 1) *Regulation of Group B systems;*
- 2) *Implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act, particularly the 1996 amendments;*
- 3) *Small water systems;*
- 4) *System compliance with regulatory requirements.*

The recommendations include re-prioritizing existing resources to new or additional activities, modifying regulatory requirements for the smallest Group B systems, and increasing the resources by \$3.8 million annually for both DOH and local health jurisdictions.



The full committee agreed to support these recommendations and requested the Department of Health pursue them as budget and

legislative proposals for the 2001 legislative session. For more information about this work, call Peter Beaton at (360) 236-3150 or [Peter.Beaton@doh.wa.gov](mailto:Peter.Beaton@doh.wa.gov)

# Death Toll Climbs in Canadian Waterborne *E. coli* Outbreak

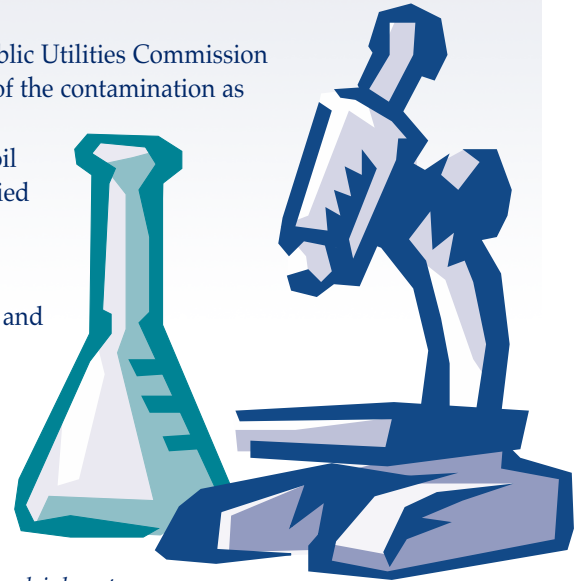
An elderly patient on May 30 became the sixth confirmed fatality in one of North America's worst *E. coli* outbreaks. The suspected cause is runoff from a storm that hit southern Ontario on May 12, contaminating the water supply for the farm town of Walkerton, population 5,000.

On June 2, the Toronto Star reported that the deaths of eleven people - mostly elderly, but also including a two year old girl - were being investigated as possible results of the outbreak, and that up to 1,000 people were ill with diarrhea, nausea, headaches, and fever, which are symptoms of *E. coli* infection. Some were hospitalized and being treated for kidney failure and other problems.

City officials were quoted as saying that the general manager of Walkerton's Public Utilities Commission had acknowledged that the utility that oversees the town's water system knew of the contamination as early as May 18 but never told municipal or health authorities. Residents complaining of bloody diarrhea convinced a regional health official to post a 'boil water' order for Walkerton water on May 21. Four days later, five people had died from kidney failure.

The outbreak has become a major political issue in Ontario, with separate investigations being conducted by the Provincial Police, the Provincial Coroner, and the Provincial Ministry of the Environment. At Water Tap publication time, The Toronto Star was maintaining a special web site with stories about the outbreak and its aftermath at [www.thestar.com/thestar/editorial/updates/special2](http://www.thestar.com/thestar/editorial/updates/special2). Headlines include:

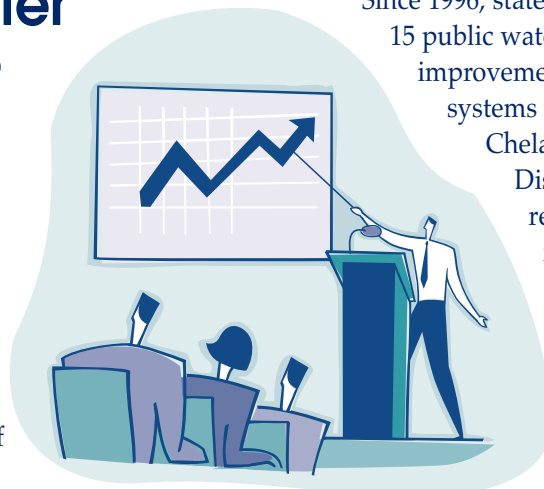
- *Test labs inundated with calls*
- *Schools to stay closed all week*
- *Walkerton residents ostracized*
- *Lawyer launches \$1 billion lawsuit*
- *Judicial probe set in water tragedy*
- *Eight weeks before Walkerton residents can drink water*
- *Calls for farm waste regulations come with sixth E. coli death*
- *Opposition blames budget cuts for E. coli tragedy*



## Chelan-Area Water Systems Improve Surface Sources

Congratulations to more than a dozen public water systems in the Lake Chelan area for making substantial improvements that minimize risk of illness from their surface water sources.

"These efforts will protect the health of residents as well as the substantial tourist and recreation population attracted to the area year around," said Gregg Grunenfelder, director of the division of drinking water.



Since 1996, state and local efforts have resulted in about 15 public water systems around Lake Chelan making improvements that protect public health. The systems vary in size and include the City of Chelan and the Lake Chelan Reclamation District, as well as systems serving resorts, state parks and other tourist and recreation facilities. Improvements have included filtering their surface water, developing wells to replace surface water sources, and connecting with other public water systems.

Grunenfelder said water systems drawing from surface sources are the department's highest priority for attention, as these sources are unprotected and more vulnerable to contamination than groundwater sources.



# Operator Certification Regulation Update

A key new requirement under the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act is the new operator certification requirement for those systems not currently required to have a certified operator. The revised regulation (WAC 246-292) requires that certified operators be “in responsible charge” for all Group A community and nontransient noncommunity (NTNC) water systems. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions concerning the rule.

## *When will the rule be adopted?*

The Division expects to have the revised rule adopted by the end of 2000, to coincide with the next professional growth reporting period.

## *How does an operator become certified?*

There will be two options for an operator to become certified. Under the existing application procedure, an operator must meet the minimum education and experience criteria, and pass an exam. However, owners of systems that are not required to have a certified operator under current regulations may have the option to “grandparent” their existing operator.

## *What is a “grandparented” operator?*

EPA recognizes there are many competent small system operators who may not meet initial requirements to become

certified. EPA has left the discretion to states to allow grandparenting for such systems and their operators. Grandparented operators will not have to take an exam to become certified, but will be expected to meet the renewal and professional growth requirements.

## *How does an operator become grandparented?*

Sometime this fall, the owner(s) of the water system will need to designate their operator and request grandparenting. Eligibility will be determined by the Division based on the water system’s compliance history. The revised regulation will likely allow one grandparented operator per system. However, water systems may elect to voluntarily certify more than one operator under the existing application and examination procedure.

## *How is the state involving stakeholders?*

Most of the changes required in the regulations are housekeeping or mandated by EPA. Where there is flexibility in the federal requirements the division has sought input from the Water Works Operator Certification Advisory Committee, the Small Water System Advisory Committee and others at more than thirty workshops during the past two years. In addition, all affected stakeholders should have received notice of the proposed new requirements in 1998.

All affected water system owners and operators listed in our records will be contacted directly this year in late summer-early fall with more information.

## Washington Proposes Capacity Strategy to Assure Water System Viability

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments of 1996 require states to develop and implement a strategy to assist public water systems in acquiring and maintaining the technical, managerial and financial capacity to comply with the SDWA.

**Technical Capacity:** physical infrastructure and ability of personnel to adequately operate and maintain the water system.

**Managerial Capacity:** ability to manage in a manner enabling the system to comply with SDWA requirements.

**Financial Capacity:** ability to acquire and maintain sufficient financial resources to comply with requirements.

### *Strategy links current efforts and plans for future*

Over the years various regulatory mechanisms have been enacted to ensure water systems have the technical, managerial and financial capability to provide safe, reliable drinking water to customers. In response to the SDWA amendments and guidance to states from EPA, the Department has developed a draft capacity strategy.

The proposed strategy links existing rules and regulatory programs, and lays the groundwork for future additions. Under

this proposal, a water system must have the following components to be identified as having capacity:

- A Water System Plan or Small Water System Management Program
- A Certified Operator
- Not exceeding approved number of service connections
- Not being a Significant Non-Complier (SNC)
- In compliance with coliform, inorganic and volatile organic chemical monitoring requirements
- Not been issued a Health Order or Departmental Order.

Systems that fall short of these components will be identified as systems in need of capacity development assistance.

*For more information or to comment on the proposed capacity strategy, contact Sean Orr at 360-236-3153. The draft strategy also is available on the Drinking Water Division website at [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw) - Written, faxed or emailed comments will be accepted through the end of July 2000. The State of Washington is required to have its strategy approved by the EPA by August 6, 2000.*

# • Mark Your Calendar - Schedule of Events •

## June 29 - Ellensburg Consumer Confidence Report: Adoption of State Regulation

An open house and public hearing on the state Consumer Confidence Report regulation is scheduled for 12 noon to 3:00 p.m. June 29, 2000. It will be held in Ellensburg at Hal Holmes Community Center, 201 N. Ruby.

The Consumer Confidence Report federal regulation requires Group A community water systems to provide an annual report to their customers describing the source and quality of their drinking water. The proposed state regulation would adopt the federal requirements. Information about Consumer Confidence Report requirements will be available during the open house from noon to 1 p.m., followed by a formal public hearing regarding the state rule, scheduled for 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Written comments will be accepted by fax, email or letter, and must be received by June 29, 2000. Please call 360-236-3151 for more information, directions to the open house/public hearing, or for a copy of the proposed state Consumer Confidence Report rule. It is also available on the Drinking Water Division website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>

## July 3rd Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Application Deadline

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund applications for the year 2000 project loan cycle must be postmarked by midnight or hand-delivered by 5:00

p.m., July 3, 2000. Applicants are required to submit one signed original and four photocopies of the application.

Mail or Ship to:

Washington State Department of Health  
Drinking Water Division  
DWSRF Program  
Post Office Box 47822  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7822

Hand Deliver to:

Washington State Department of Health  
Drinking Water Division  
DWSRF Program  
7171 Cleanwater Lane, Bldg #3  
Tumwater, Washington 98504-7822

Applications are available on the internet at [www.crab.wa.gov/pwtf](http://www.crab.wa.gov/pwtf). For more information, please contact Chris Gagnon at (360) 236-3095 or email [chris.gagnon@doh.wa.gov](mailto:chris.gagnon@doh.wa.gov).

## July 11th - Olympia Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

### *Intended Use Plan for Capitalization Grants*

A public hearing on the Washington State Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Draft Part I Intended Use Plan (IUP) for the Fourth and Fifth Year Federal Capitalization Grants is scheduled for 9:00 - 9:30 a.m., July 11, 2000. It will be held in Olympia at the state Department of Health, Division of Drinking Water, 7211 Cleanwater Lane, Building 12 conference room.

The plan explains how the state proposes to use federal drinking water funds over the next several years beginning with state fiscal year 2001. The purpose of this public hearing is to inform interested parties of the state's recommended actions and seek advice on the use of these funds.

The draft is subject to a 30 day public review and comment period. It is available on the Drinking Water Division website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>, the State Library, public libraries, or by calling the Division of Drinking Water at (360) 236-3102.

All written and oral comments from the public hearing will be summarized, responded to, and incorporated into the final documents when submitted to the EPA. Anyone who cannot attend the public hearing is welcome to submit written comments on this plan. Written comments must be submitted to DOH by July 18, 2000.



## Sept. 1 - Oct. 15 Join the WaterWeeks 2000 adventure!

Washington WaterWeeks 2000 is a statewide series of more than 150 water-related education and action activities that takes place September 1 through October 15. Activities are planned across the state by people who care about water, such as water systems, service groups, youth groups, schools, businesses and government agencies.

For information, call 360-943-3642 or see [www.waterweeks.org](http://www.waterweeks.org)



To register call these contacts...

### **ERWOW**

Evergreen Rural Water  
of Washington  
509-962-6326

### **WETRC**

Washington Environmental  
Training Center  
253-288-3369

### **AWWA**

American Water Works  
(NW WA Subsection)  
425-257-8875

Peggy Cornish  
425-257-8838

Judy Grycko  
1-877-767-2992

Keith Olson  
425-255-6370

Kay DeRoos  
206-362-4728

Roger Nottage  
253-848-5519

## Training and Education Calendar July - Dec. 2000

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>
July 25	Source Water Metering*	Richland	ERWOW
July 26	Source Water Metering*	Spokane	ERWOW
July 27	Source Water Metering*	Omak	ERWOW
Aug 1	Source Water Metering*	Anacortes	ERWOW
Aug 2	Source Water Metering*	Chehalis	ERWOW
Aug 8	Wellhead Protection*	Mt. Vernon	ERWOW
Aug 15	Wellhead Protection*	Olympia	ERWOW
Aug 22	Wellhead Protection*	Chelan	ERWOW
Aug 23-25	Basic Water Works	Auburn	WETRC
Aug 29	Wellhead Protection*	Walla Walla	ERWOW
Aug 29-30	Water Certification Exam Review	Auburn	WETRC
Sept 8	AC Pipe Work Practice Procedures	Auburn	WETRC
Sept 12	Operator Certification Exam Review*	Issaquah	ERWOW
Sept 12-14	Water Certification Exam Review	Yakima	WETRC
Sept 13	Operator Certification Exam Review*	Ellensburg	ERWOW
Sept 13-15	Cross Connection Control Specialist Cert. Review	Auburn	WETRC
Sept 14	Operator Certification Exam Review*	Ritzville	ERWOW
Sept 18-19	Evergreen Rural Water Fall Conference	Chelan	ERWOW
Sept 19-21	Water Certification Exam Review	Everett	WETRC
Sept 26	Operator Certification Exam Review*	Poulsbo	ERWOW
Sept 28	Building Positive Field-Office Relations (AWWA)	Vancouver	Peggy Cornish
Oct 2-4	Joint Conference on Health	Tacoma	Kay DeRoos
Oct 3-5	Pump Operation and Maintenance	Tacoma	WETRC
Oct 6	Operations & Maintenance for Small Water Systems	Pt. Townsend	AWWA
Oct 11	Water Main Flushing & Dechlorination (AWWA)	Bellevue	Keith Olson
Oct 11-13	Basic Electrical	Tacoma	WETRC
Oct 17-19	Water and Wastewater Disinfection	Tacoma	WETRC
Oct 19	Building Positive Field-Office Relations	Mt. Vernon	Peggy Cornish
Oct 24	2nd Annual Cross Connection Seminar	Fife	Roger Nottage
Oct 24	Chlorination Basics*	Kelso	ERWOW
Oct 25	Chlorination Basics*	Everett	ERWOW
Oct 27	AC Pipe Work Practice Procedures	Auburn	WETRC
Nov 1	Chlorination Basics*	Moses Lake	ERWOW
Nov 14-15	Process Control and Instrumentation	Tacoma	WETRC
Nov 16	Automatic Control Valve Op. & Maintenance (AWWA)	Kirkland	Keith Olson
Dec 8	AC Pipe Work Practice Procedures	Auburn	WETRC
Dec 8	Groundwater Issues (AWWA)	Tacoma	Judy Grycko
Dec 13-15	Basic Water Works	Auburn	WETRC
Dec 14	Basic Water Works for Clerical Personnel (AWWA)	Kirkland	Keith Olson

### Additional Training Links:

AWWA Website - <http://www.pnws-awwa.org/index.htm>

ERWOW Website - <http://www.ERWOW.org>

WETRC Website - <http://www.ivygreen.ctc.edu/wetrc>

\*Indicates  
training is less  
than \$25.00

**For the complete Training Calendar visit the Drinking Water Homepage  
& click on Training - [www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw)**

# Tap Tips:

## Surprised By a Coliform Violation Notice?

Make sure your water system information is entered timely and correctly into our water system data base.



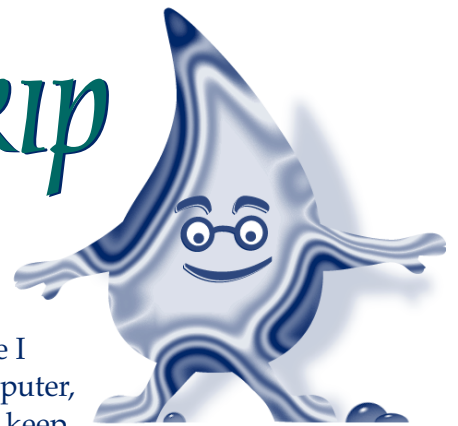
When we receive lab slips with errors, they are returned to the regional office for follow-up. The resulting delay in entering your water system sampling information may result in your system being placed on a violation report.

You can help us by avoiding the three most common errors in completing lab slips.

1. **Public Water System ID#:** ID # is missing or numbers are transposed.
2. **Type of sample:** One "type of sample" box must be checked; please remember to check only one.
3. **Penmanship - legibility:** If we can't read it - we can't enter it!

Not counting violations caused by errors on lab slips, most coliform violations occur in the summer and fall months. We see an increase in monitoring violations during these months because people sometimes leave on vacation without collecting their monthly coliform sample or they get "too busy." Please remember that most bacteriological water quality problems occur in the summer and fall, so it is especially important to sample in these months.

# Dr. Drip



Dear Dr. Drip:

Do you know why I wasn't concerned about all that year 2000 bugaboo? Because I have never even used a computer, much less owned one. But I keep reading in the Water Tap that there is a lot of good stuff out on the internet. Frankly, I'm ready to buy a computer and use the internet, but the costs add up quickly! I see people using the computers at the library (*yes I do read books*), and I think some of them were surfing. How can I get access to the internet, with or without my own computer?

~ Hope To Hang Ten

Dear Hope to Hang Ten:

*Surfin' is the wave of the future! I'm talking pipeline, 20 footers and funky colored shirts. You are so correct with your statement that there is a lot of valuable information on the internet. My Department of Health insider says the department's website [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov), is chock full of great and useful information.*

*If you currently own a computer and have surfed before but are not interested in paying for internet access, many companies will connect you for free. These companies are referred to as Internet Service Providers (ISPs), and you can get a list of them by typing "Free ISPs" in any search engine. It will likely require you to send for free software to gain access.*

*If you currently own or have access to a computer but have not surfed, the easiest way for you to get your feet wet (I love saying that) is to go to a library and sign up for time at one of their internet stations. Call your local library to confirm they offer this service. Once there, type "Free ISPs" in any search engine (there are several search engines to choose from) and follow directions on how to gain access (some provide 800 numbers for assistance).*

*If you currently do not own or have access to a computer the best place to get started is at your local library. Again, call to make sure your library offers internet access, and if they don't, a nearby library should. The best advice the good doctor can prescribe is to get plenty of rest, drink plenty of water (yuk, yuk) and start surfin' baby.*



(Continued from Front Page)

## Regulation of Fluoride in Water

Too much fluoride in water supplies is a potential health risk and subject to federal and state water quality standards. The Drinking Water Division regulates water fluoridation according to WAC 246-290-460, available on the internet at <http://slc.leg.wa.gov/wacbytitle.htm>



In general, the state regulations say that systems adding fluoride must:

- Get written Department of Health approval of fluoridation treatment facilities before placing them in service.
- Maintain fluoride concentrations in the range 0.8 through 1.3 mg/L throughout the distribution system.
- Monitor fluoride levels daily and report the results monthly to the Department of Health.
- Analyze a portion of a water sample, record the results in the monthly operating report to the state, and send the remainder of the sample to a state-approved laboratory for analysis, the results of which should not vary more than 0.30 mg/l from the purveyor's result.

For more information about the Division's role in regulating water fluoridation, contact Steve Baker at (360) 236-3138.

## In This Issue

The following people have contributed to the production of this issue of the Water Tap: Sara Baker, Peter Beaton, Donna Freier, Chris Gagnon, Gregg Grunenfelder, Peggy Johnson, Steve Kelso, Jennifer Prodzinski, Lisa Raysby, Sean Orr, Ronni Woolrich, Judy J. Sides - co-editor and Janice Keller - Communications Manager/co-editor.

The Water Tap is published by the Department of Health, Division of Drinking Water, to provide information on subjects of interest to water system owners, water works operators and others interested in drinking water. Comments and questions are welcome. Past issues are available by writing to the editor, the Water Tap, Division of Drinking Water, PO Box 47822, Olympia, WA 98504-7822 or Email your request to [DWINFO@doh.wa.gov](mailto:DWINFO@doh.wa.gov). Past issues are also available on our website <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw>

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for Drinking Water  
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Call this number after-hours  
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your system;  
• Can't wait until the next  
business day.



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